DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 249 945 IR 011 388

AUTHOR Bell, John
TITLE "TV's Sort of...Just There": Critical Television Viewing Skills.
PUB DATE [84]
NOTE 26p.; For related documents, see ED 215 667-671 and ED 244 584-585.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Critical Thinking; *Curriculum Development; *Instructional Materials; *Mass Media Effects; Programing (Broadcast); Teaching Methods; *Television Curriculum; *Television Viewing
IDENTIFIERS *Critical Television Viewing Skills Project

ABSTRACT

Television viewing is shaping all of us and especially young people, far more than we know, and perhaps more than we are shaping ourselves. On television Americans see a lot of alcohol consumption; few old people; and many policemen, doctors, lawyers, judges, and law-breakers, but few blue collar workers, artists, salespeople, clerks, or engineers. Television has provoked a wide array of responses from almost total embracement to total rejection, with teachers having generally sought a middle ground. The most authoritative guidance on how teachers should deal with television comes from a federal project to develop a four-level curriculum on critical television viewing, which resulted in the following materials: (1) a K-4 curriculum which includes materials for teachers, students, and families; (2) a middle-school text entitled "Critical Television Viewing: A Language Skills Work-a-Text"; (3) a high school textbook, "Inside Television: A Guide to Critical Viewing"; and a postsecondary/adult textbook, "Television Literacy: Critical Viewing Skills." Although several indicators point to the rapid demise of curricula on critical television viewing skills, such skills have not been completely forgotten. Television should be studied as an element in a broad cultural context, across all curricula. Four reference notes are listed. (LMM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED249945

"TV's Sort of... Just There": Critical Television Viewing Skills

Prof. John Bell
New York City Technical College
Writing & Speech Department

IR 011388

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
John Bell
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

"TV's Sort of... Just There": Critical Television Viewing Skills

Not long ago a memo came across my desk announcing another startling revolution:

> We are at the threshold of a major revolution in education, comparable to that of the invention of the printing press. The instrument of this revolution is the computer. The pace is rapidly increasing. Within the next decades, the dominant mode of learning at all levels, and in almost all subject areas, will be through the interactive use of computers. Join the revolution.

I'm sure you've seen one just like it recently, and you may have responded in much the same manner that I did, that is to jump on the computer literacy bandwagon and enroll in a mini-course on microcomputers--in my case, eight weeks of Apple II Plus. I'm not about to argue that all of you should join me, and that I've seen the real light and that the problems of literacy, as English teachers define them (as opposed to the bureaucratic definitions we're all familiar with), will all wither away in the brave new world of computer literacy. No, I don't believe that computers are the answer to problems that require complex solutions like getting students to read and write more; computers may help, yes, but they may distract also. Indeed the bizarre image of a generation literate in

Basic or Pascal, but only semi-literate in English occasionally rattles my brain. No, I want to return to a past revolution, one that most of us have passed by in the last five to ten years, and one that, unbeknownst to most of us, is shaping all of us, and especially young people, far more than we know, and perhaps more than we are shaping ourselves.

A few statistics.

TV Households In America

1950	3.9 Million	9% of America's homes
1960	26 Million	55%
1970	60 Million	95.2%
1980	78 Million	98%

Today, roughly half of America's homes have two or more television sets, and more homes have TV sets than have telephones or, more strikingly, indoor plumbing.

Hours The American Family Watches Television Each Day

The American family watches television more than 6½ hours each day. Children watch almost 4 hours. By 18 most children will have spent more time watching TV than they have attending school, and they will have seen approximately 20,000 30-second commercials each year of their lives. At retirement age, assuming it stays at sixty-five, each American on the average will have spent nine years--twelve waking--watching television, second only to time spent sleeping, and each American will have watched almost a million and a half television commercials.

What do Americans see on television?

Lots Of Alcoholic Consumption

In prime time viewers see at least three instances of drinking per hour--six on soap operas--and TV characters, on the whole, spend only half as much time drinking coffee or tea as they spend drinking alcoholic beverages.

Few Old People

The elderly, America's fastest growing minority, at present constitute about 14 percent of our population, yet people over sixty-five represent only 2 percent of all dramatic characters portrayed on television and 30 percent of those portrayed are likely to be robbed or beaten, whereas the real-world rate is 1 percent, the lowest rate for any age group. What a tragic paradox this situation leads to. The elderly, who frequently regard television as a friendly companion, meet the images of a terrifying world on their TV screens. As a result they are often afraid to enter the real world where they might find human companionship and in the end they become more and more enthralled to both terror and television.

Policemen, Doctors, Lawyers, Judges And Law-Breakers, But Few Blue Collar Workers, Artists, Salespeople, Clerks Or Engineers

The vast majority of these characters are male, roughly

75 percent, and when women do appear they are most likely to be housewives, entertainers, or people of no observable occupation despite the fact that women make up almost half the work force of our nation.

I could go on: there are studies that suggest that television viewing slows down reading improvement and may interfere with the general learning of children, studies that have found that heavy Sesame Street viewers tend to be the most aggressive children in nursery schools, studies that show cartoon watching decreases creativity--as does watching educational television... And I have gone this far, not because much of what I say here is new; in fact, most is old hat to most of us. And that is my point: the television revolution has passed us by, almost unawares. We are prepared to study computer languages, computer science, and computer technology, but after a day of work at the terminal or in a textbook, we want to sit down in our livingrooms with our good old friend the television set and simply watch our worlds turn.

I am no different, of course. Television is too friendly, too everyday to scrutinize. To view television critically requires that we look into ourselves and raise questions about how we have become who we are and how we have constructed, or absorbed, our conceptions of reality. At the end of a hard day, who wants these questions invading our livingrooms?

Television has provoked a wide array of responses--from almost total embracement at one pole to total rejection at the other. McLuhan, for example, is frequently depicted as spreading the gospel of television, and his catch phrases such as "global village" and "electric age", have become the watchwords (and cliches) of those committed to the wonders of high technology. At the opposite pole stand critics like Marie Winn and Jerry Manders. Winn finds television dangerously addictive, as the title of her book The Plug-In Drug (New York: Viking, 1979) suggests, and she sees television viewing in early childhood as disrupting fundamental learning processes. Manders in Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television (New York: Quill, 1978) agrees with her, and carries his analysis one step further into the political sphere. Not only is television cognitively detrimental, but it generates passive minds made ripe for an autocratic social structure television has largely created. His solution--junk all television sets.

Teachers, for the most part, have sought a middle ground. Television, like most technological developments, brings with it both positive and negative characteristics. Like fire, uncontrolled it can do enormous damage, but harnessed it can perform wondrous deeds. A teacher's job therefore is to educate the public in the appropriate uses of television.

But how should teachers deal with television? The

most authoritative guidance we have so far comes as the product of federal contracts let in 1978 to develop curriculum packages on four levels: elementary (grades K-4), middle school (grades 5-8), secondary (grades 9-12), and postsecondary (college and general adult). These contracts were fostered by a mounting desire among educators and policy makers, especially in the latter half of the 1970's, to develop a media literacy curriculum. A 1976 report from the Television and Children Conference jointly sponsored by the Ford Foundation, the Markle Foundation, and the National Science Foundation recommended such a curriculum, and the general sense of those who attended the April, 1978 Television, the Book, and the Classroom Conference sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education (USOE) and the Library of Congress was that such a curriculum was needed. As a result of this latter conference, USOE issued a Request for Proposals and subsequently funded the development and dissemination of four curricula. USOE defined Critical Television Viewing Skills as "those factors which enable a person to distinguish among a wide range of program elements so that they can make judicious use of their viewing time," and listed the following abilities as examples of such skills:

> to understand the psychological implications of commercials;
> to distinguish fact from fiction;
> to recognize and appreciate differing and/or opposing points of view;
> to develop an understanding of the style and

content of dramatic presentations, documentaries, public affairs, news, and other television programming; and
to understand the relation between television programming and the printed word.

By 1980 the four projects were completed and presented to various educational and parent groups across the country. (What are the curricula like?) The K-4 curriculum was developed under the direction of Charles Corder-Bolz at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory in Austin, Texas. Guided by the notions that "critical viewing skills appear to be a combination of reasoning skills and televiaion viewing habits" and that "acquisition and regular use of critical viewing skills can be expected to require an extended period, maybe several years," SEDL produced a package of teacher, student, and family materials including teacher Cue Cards, a number of children's stories, and a group of family newsletters that were designed to support in an innovative manner exisiting curricula rather than create "another separate curriculum for already over-burdened teachers." To give a feeling for some of the materials, here are a few quotes from the synopses of two of the children's stories, one of the Frog Fables, See-More Finds A Friend and one of the Suzie Stories, Suzie's Broken TV:

See-More, a curious green frog leaves home to see more of the world and learn about TV. See-More meets... Tuner-Fish, who is addicted

to TV watching. Seeing TV for the first time, the curious frog questions how pictures get into the box... and decides to learn more about TV...

Suzie and her family are forced to find other pastimes, while their TV set is in the repair shop. Suzie rediscovers bike riding, tree climbing and visiting with her neighbors...

The middle school curriculum (grades 5-8) was developed by public television station WNET/Thirteen, New York under the direction of Debbi Wasserman Bilowit. Like the SEDL materials, the WNET curriculum was designed to be incorporated into established curricula, especially the language arts curricula: "The instructional design is such that the teacher will readily recognize most viewing skills and concepts as traditional reading/language arts skills." The curriculum, written by Lynne Brenner Ganek and Debbi Wasserman Bilowit, consists of a ten-chaptered text entitled Critical Television Viewing: A Language Skills Work-A-Text (New York: Cambridge, 1980) which is also available in a Teacher's Annotated Edition and includes "activities, charts, games, logs, illustrations and photographs to introduce and reinforce concepts." A fairly accurate sense of the book's scope and intentions can be gained by simply listing the chapter headings, each of which poses a question requiring critical viewing skills to answer:

1. How Does Television Fit Into Your Life?
2. What Are the Ingredients for a Television Story?
3. Who Puts a Television Program Together?

4. How Do Different Types of Television Programs Compare to Each Other?
5. How Does Television Persuade Us?
6. How Do You Analyze Television News?
7. How Does a Program Get on the Air?
8. What Do You Like About the Programs You Watch?
9. How Do You Review a Television Program?
10. How Can You Become a More Critical Television Viewer?

The secondary school curriculum project (grades 9-12), directed by Donna Lloyd-Kolkin, was developed by Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development in conjunction with the Office of Radio and Television of public television station WGBH, Boston. It consists of a high school textbook, Inside Television: A Guide to Criticial Viewing (Palo Alto: Science and Behavior Books, 1980) by Ned White, along with a detailed Teacher's Guide and reproducible work-sheets, and was designed as a one semester elective course, although its units, because of their independent natures, might be integrated into existing courses such as English, social studies, and economics. Each of the book's seven units has four parts--(1) text, to provide information, (2) activities, to deepen understanding of the information provided, (3) readings, to present additional information, and (4) Work-sheets, to encourage role-playing activities related to television. The seven unit titles, along with a few added words of clarification, when necessary, suggest the curriculum's scope:

1. You and Television
2. The Television Industry
3. Programs and Production
4. Selling
5. That's the Way It Is--covers news and documentary programming
6. The Television Environment--focuses on TV content and its effects on viewers
7. A Saving Radiance--looks to the future, especially cable TV

The fourth, and last curriculum, the postsecondary curriculum (college and general adult) was developed by the School of Communication at Boston University under the direction of Donis Dondis. It consists of a textbook Television Literacy: Critical Viewing Skills (Boston: Dendron Press, 1981), a Workbook coordinated to the text, and an Instructor's Guide. The textbook contains four modules designed to be presented as a full-semester course in critical television viewing, although, similar to the secondary school curriculum, each of the modules was also created sufficiently independent to serve as a supplement in a related course such as English, sociology, popular culture, or economics. All of the modules, moreover, were conceived as possible texts for adult education classes or community discussion groups. Each module organized around six concepts contains explanatory narrative, workbook exercises, Fact Sheets that generally supplement the basic text, and TView points, two quotes at the end of each concept section offering different opinions on the concept treated. A list of the module titles and the six

concepts treated in each module provides a good overview of the curriculum:

I. Behind the Scenes--Structure, Techniques, Creative Process, Business, Politics, and Effects of TV.
II. Persuasive Programming--Appeals, Effects, Methods, Claims, Form and Structure, Research.
III. Entertainment Programming--Structure of Prime-Time Shows; Ingredients of Prime-Time Shows; Entertainment Themes on TV; Social Behavior on TV; Talk, Fun, and Games on TV; TV as Popular Culture.
IV. Informational Programming--Origins and Constraints of Informational Programming; Gathering, Assigning and Selecting News: Organizing the News; Seeing the News: Impact of TV News; Documentaries and Special News Programs.

In overall look Television Literacy reminds one of the common structures of introductory speech or freshman composition books.

How effective have these curricula been in fostering critical television viewing skills among students and adults in our country? The simplest answer is it's too soon to know. Arthur Asa Berger in his review of the four curricula in the Journal of Communication (Winter,1982) suggests that their results should be known in thirty years. Perhaps this is true, but I think that there are some indicators that prompt the thought that the results are already in.

One indicator is the fact that once funding for the project's second phase, the training of educators throughout the country and the dissemination of the curriculum materials in workshops at national conventions and meetings of community

service organizations, was expended, the federal government essentially dropped out of the picture. The project, it seems, got lost in the HEW-Department of Education reorganization (the contracts were with HEW) and has never resurfaced in the Reagan administration. Indeed, the achievement of computer literacy by every student has been a hallmark of President Reagan's educational proposals, but to my knowledge he has made no mention of media literacy or critical television viewing skills.

Another troublesome indicator was Senator William Proxmire's presentation of a "Golden Fleece" Award (his monthly prize for ridiculous and wasteful federal spending) to the Boston University Critical Television Viewing Skills Project in December, 1978. His citation reads:

> If education has failed to endow college students with critical facilities that can be applied to the spectrum of their lives, a series of new courses on how to watch television critically will not provide it.

So troubling, in fact, was this dubious award, that Donis Dondis, Boston University's project director and Dean of its School of Communication saw fit to devote his "Forward" to Television Literacy to point out Senator Proxmire's misunderstanding of television's influence. From my point of view, his arguments are sensible, but it is difficult to believe that they carried much weight for future federal

spenders, and it is likely that Senator Proxmire's award contributed to the federal government's reduced interest in the project beyond the initially contractual funding.

A third indicator has to do with the availability of the curriculum materials. None of the four curricula was placed with a major publishing house, although each of the project contractors hoped for such support. Consequently, at present only two of the four curricula, the ones more fortunate with their publishers, the 5-8 grade and secondary school, are solidly available, and SEDL and Boston University are close to having exhausted their supplies. Who has seen any of the materials? Not many, I would suggest. And fewer have seen them all. What libraries have them? What book stores display them? None that I know of. In truth, I have described them as fully as I have because little has been said about them since the descriptive articles and press releases appeared while the projects were under way.

In addition, few book reviews exist. Book Review Index lists four, and of the four only one, the previously mentioned review of Arthur Berger, can be termed a critical view in any sense, and it is the only review that deals with all four curricula. No mention of the critical television viewing skills projects is made in the recent extensive three-part bibliographic essay, "The Literature of Television" by Mary

Cassata and Thomas Skill, published in Choice (January, February, and April, 1982), and only one of the four curricula, Inside Television, appears at all, and it is presented not as a secondary school textbook, but as a book that offers a self-help approach "to guide the viewer toward acquiring a deepening awareness of the television world and the real world." (Choice, April, 1982, p.1032) Needless to say, the book's primary identity seems to have been lost.

Finally, to measure the presence of critical television skills curricula in the mainstream of public education, I interviewed some teachers in my local school system, the New York City Public School System. At my son's elementary school I was told that television viewing skills were not part of formal instruction ("We stress the basics."), although teachers occasionally recommend and discuss worthwhile television programs in their classes. A talk with the local school district curriculum coordinator revealed that he had a vague sense of a federally sponsored project, but was more familiar with the Board of Education of the City of New York's own curriculum bulletin, a copy of which he believed he could locate. He also said that the district itself had no formal curriculum, but a hands-on TV studio in a junior high school would be used to familiarize bussed-in classes with television once appropriate funding could be arranged. A phone call to the Center for Curriculum Development at the Central Board

enabled me to obtain a copy of the curriculum bulletin, Television and Growing Up: K-9, (1978), and I also learned that television viewing skills have little curriculum priority for the Central Board: some local school districts are fairly active in fostering them, while others pay almost no attention to them. The Central Board's prime concern is basic skills education; media technology is viewed as valuable only if it promotes the three r's. In short, if my survey of local conditions is in any way representative of general conditions across the country, it seems clear that the drive to make students in American schools television literate crested in the late 1970's, and now in 1984 the rapidly rising wave of tougher educational standards (with computer literacy as its new symbol) is in the ascendant.

To say this, of course, does not mean that critical television skills have been forgotten. Peggy Charren, the founder and president of ACT (Action for Children's Television), and Martin Sandler have just published Changing Channels: Living (Sensibly) with Television (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1983), a book which covers much of the material found in the four curricula, and claims to present "a balanced account of television; acknowledging its flaws and mistakes while extolling its potential" (back cover), a claim, with the exception of the touch of hype, to which the writers of the four curriculum projects would probably agree. Other

books also have come forth. For example, Dorothy and Jerome Singer along with Diana Zuckerman in 1981 published Teaching Television: How to Use TV to Your Child's Advantage (New York: Dial Press), a book whose goal is to help parents understand TV and put their knowledge to use to stimulate critical understanding in their children. This book's table of contents, in fact, reads much like the tables of contents of the curriculum project books. And both these books can be found on library shelves. In truth, a vast number of people--teachers, administrators, and parents--still care and continue to foster the teaching of critical television viewing skills. But I think it is fair to say that the public resources and energy available to do so have certainly diminished over the last few years, and it may not be premature to suggest that the four federally sponsored curricula will soon fade into the oblivion that has consumed so many innovative curricula in the past.

Why should we be concerned with the apparently rapid demise of critical television viewing skills curricula? Weren't they as the test of even short time already seems to have shown just frills that detracted from the basics? Obviously I don't think so, and I could construct a common argument, in part based on the statistics that I began this article with, to support my position. Instead, however, let me offer a few personal observations that symbolize my point

of view, before turning to some brief thoughts about teaching television literacy, in conclusion. More and more as I listen to young people talk, or I read their writings, or I see the plays of young dramatists (my initial training was in drama), I am impressed by the images from television that organize their views of reality. On the two occasions that I have heard George Gerbner, Dean of the Annenberg School of Communications, speak, he has stressed the notion that a culture is controlled by its stories. Perhaps it is presumptuous of me, a child of the Bible and classical literature, to say that I fear the consequences of a culture raised on television stories, but I do. In one of my classes recently I asked my students to log their television watching. One married student said, "We put the set on each morning and leave it on all day; should I log just the hours we watch? We're a close family. Most of the time we're doing something else. The kids just sit down occasionally and watch. The TV's sort of... just there." One last observation; my son is an avid storybook maker. He is almost nine years old. When he was younger, he would draw single pictures and speak stories from them. As he has gotten older, the number of pictures has increased, and he has added writing, in comic book fashion. But the pictures have always come first. Nowadays, on a single sheet there are often many pictures, long before words appear, words by the way which

are often mispelled, and around each picture there is a television screen border. In essence, he is thinking in television story boards.

How should critical television viewing skills be taught? I must confess I have no simple answers to this question, nor do I claim to be expert or original in the suggestions that I give. At best perhaps I can offer some useful old thoughts that may still be relevant.

A sensible approach, I think, is to look more carefully at what we call critical television viewing skills. How many of them are actually television specific? Television, after all, is a medium that makes use of other media--language and visual images, primarily--and much of its content can be met outside of television as well. Skills such as understanding the principles of television persuasion or evaluating the plot structure of a television drama are actually applications of broader critical skills than just television viewing skills. A careful look at the definitions of critical television viewing skills used by the four curriculum projects (definitions, by the way, that do not exactly overlap), will show, I believe, that every television viewing skill identified is rooted in a broader set of skills. Television modifies contents such as persuasion or plot stucture, but it does not generate content out of itself. And some of the skills called television viewing skills are more aptly called fundamental living skills.

When one says, "Time is of the essence," a fundamental principle of life is being stated. Managing one's television watching in part means managing one's precious time--life. The same idea holds for influencing the changing of television programming. One must believe that he can influence the world before he takes on the television industry.

My point is that television fits into a broad cultural context, and I believe it should be studied as an element in such a context. I would also take the same position on critical thinking skills, skills which academic testers tell us students are in great need of at present, and skills which the federal government is now promoting the development of--in specialized courses, of course. In our rush back to the basics--the three r's--and to add computer literacy to them, we comfort ourselves with the delusion that we are standing on bed rock dealing with the essentials of modern education. But is not managing one's time more essential, or knowing what foods to eat or how to take care of one's body or how to live with one's neighbor? Education is not fundamentally a matter of curricula or skills per se, it is as Theodore Roethke has called life--a waking (I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow)--a waking into a coherent and valued sense of reality. Schools should provide the critical tools necessary to investigate and comprehend human experience so that one can act wisely, with respect for one's self, one's

neighbor, and one's natural environment.

At no level of education today can one master the basics without studying television. Neil Postman in Teaching as a Conserving Activity (New York: Dell, 1979) calls television the "First Curriculum" and regards it as "The major educational enterprise now being undertaken in the United States." (p.50, his italics) The television curriculum he says is essentially the opposite of the school curriculum which is "subject-matter centered, word-centered, reason-centered, future-centered, hierarchical, secular, socializing, segmented, and coherent" (p.66), and the function of the "Second Curriculum," the school curriculum, is to "study, evaluate, and criticize the First, not make alliances with it." (p.188) A television set should not be turned on in a classroom unless the teacher "intends to call attention to how the medium affects the audience... [or] how [it] stuctures our time... [or] how it affects our social relations..." (p.194) I am not sure whether Professor Postman is right in his labeling of first and second curricula (perhaps my wishing to hold out is simply a form of romantic regret), but I do agree with him about the fundamental way to use television in the classroom. Too often I have heard easy, and what I regard as self-gratulating statements such as, "My class watched The Scarlet Letter on television and it's amazing how many of them went off to find the book. Television can

really encourage students to read." Those who say them never seem to wonder what's being read. Is the book in a sense read through the remembered television images? And if so, how is this book reading? Does one visualize a novel from written text in the same way that one "visualizes a televised novel? No, I would say, and the differences are really more important than statistical statements about television's power to encourage reading. Indeed, a "reading" of The Scarlet Letter after seeing the television version, may not, strictly speaking, be a reading at all.

So, how should we teach critical television viewing skills? We should teach them across all curricula, right from kindergarten, by actively including television in all discussions to which it is relevant. In a sense this means rewriting all curricula, and it can most easily be achieved by having all teachers become more expert in critical television viewing skills. If we are all going to become computer literate soon, there is no reason why we can't become media literate as well. One good beginning would be for all of us to read the curriculum packages that have already been developed. The writers of each are quite sensible when they say that the whole curriculum need not be used as a single course, and that parts can be integrated into other curricula. Most certainly, the four curricula, taken as a whole, provide

numerous suggestions for creative lessons that teach more than just critical television viewing skills. What we need now is to get the curriculum materials on library shelves so that they can be read.

We also need to think more about the study of television and media in general. Asa Berger in his aforementioned review points out that the four curricula tend to be significantly redundent. Much of this can be attributed to the funding of four separate projects and loose coordination among them. It would help, however, if we were more aware of the ages at which particular skills are best taught. Scholarship in this area is needed. In addition, since we are talking about the study of television, I think it is appropriate to suggest that all students preparing to be teachers, especially those preparing to be language arts and English teachers, be required to take at least one course in media criticism which focuses on critical television viewing skills. Our best insurance that critical television viewing skills be taught is that teachers be informed about them.

Television's place <u>vis a vis</u> English departments in colleges and graduate schools also needs to be considered. If television controls the stories that will run our future culture, then those of us who specialize in establishing the canon of good stories and the methods by which they are best

analyzed, must encorporate the critical study of television into our discipline. In effect, we must become students of comparative media and create the appropriate histories and critical languages for such study. Communication theorists have done much to make us aware of television's role as public information giver, persuader, and entertainer. It is our task now, I believe, to link television to the classical literary tradition and value it in a culturally enhancing manner. What we want is a television not"sort of... just there," but a television that "makes our garden grow."

Notes

[1]Debra Lieberman, "A New High School Curriculum: Critical Television Viewing Skills," NASSP Bulletin, pp. 54-5. Ms. Lieberman was a project associate for Far West Laboratory, the developer of the high school curriculum.

[2]Training Manual for Teaching Critical TV Viewing Skills, SEDL and USDE, 1979, pp.43, 54, 55.

[3]The quotes are from the Teacher's Annotated Edition, pp.9-10.

[4]Quoted in Sally Bedell "Now It's the Three R's--Plus Archie and Edith," TV Guide, June 9, 1979, p.22.